

HMIS-Based Performance Measurement Recommendations

System-Level Performance Measures

System-level measures will enable the Buffalo and Erie County community to evaluate the performance of its homeless service system in meeting both local and national goals related to reducing and preventing homelessness. These measures will also enable our continuum to track progress on the PRISM Project ten-year plan and to compare our performance against other continua across the nation.

System-Level Performance Measures

- Reduce chronic homelessness
- Reduce multi-episode patterns of homelessness
- Increase placements in permanent housing
- Increase receipt of mainstream benefits

Reduce Chronic Homelessness

Measure:

Number of people in the homeless services system who have a disabling condition, are unaccompanied (served as individuals), and were continuously homeless for a year or more or had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Standard:

Drop in annual count of chronically homeless persons by a specified number or percentage point.

HMIS Data Elements:

- Household Identifier
- Disabling Condition
- Residence Prior to Program Entry
- Program Entry Date
- Program Exit Date
- Program Identification

Strengths:

- Enables community to track progress in reducing chronic homelessness by examining changes in the number of chronically homeless people served by the continuum.
- Measure is intimately connected with the ten-year plan to end homelessness.
- Reducing chronic homelessness is also an appropriate measure for “mainstream” agencies that are responsible for reducing the risk of becoming homeless for vulnerable populations including ex-offenders and persons with mental illness.

Concerns:

- Will require several years of data collection in order to track a client’s episodes of homelessness over a three year period. We may, however, choose to ask retrospective questions on homeless episodes during the early stages of HMIS implementation. This will require use of separate fields to determine how long clients have been homeless and how many episodes of homelessness they have experienced in the past three years.
- Clearer definitions on homeless “episode” will be needed. The continuum will need to come to some agreement on what constitutes a “homeless episode.”

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- Many providers are not specifically trained to diagnose disabilities and may be uncomfortable making an assessment of a client's disability status. There are several ways that disability status information can be collected – i.e., through client interview, self-administered form, observation, or assessment.

Reduce Multi-Episode Patterns of Homelessness

Measure:

Percent of clients exiting the homeless services system who access emergency shelters, transitional housing, or are otherwise determined to be homeless again within a two-year period. Measure excludes clients who exit an emergency shelter to move into a transitional or permanent supportive housing program.

Standard:

Drop in percentage of persons who re-enter the homeless system within two years of exiting the system OR count the number of homeless episodes for each client and track changes in either the average number of episodes (for people with more than one) or the percentage of people with different numbers of episodes.

HMIS Data Elements:

- Program Exit Date
- Personal Identification
- Program Entry Date
- Program Identification
- Residence Prior to Program Entry

Strengths:

- This measure sets as its objective a reduction in the percentage of all clients who become homeless again within a specified period of time (two years). The measure assesses the community's ability to ensure that people leaving homeless assistance programs maintain housing.
- This is critically important for the Buffalo and Erie County community given the fact the 92% of homeless PRISM Project survey respondents were homeless more than once.

Concerns:

- Clients who move from shelter to transitional or permanent supportive housing programs need to be excluded from this measure. Must be clear on what constitutes an "exit" from the homeless system.
- Special populations, including victims of domestic violence and youth, should be excluded from this measure as their inclusion would be "counter-intuitive" to the goals of these programs. Typically, providers serving domestic violence victims or youth espouse an "open door" policy which encourages clients to return if they are endangered or in need of further assistance.
- Measure may suggest that all repeat episodes of homelessness are negative outcomes. This ignores the fact that some people may have to experience more than one episode of homelessness before they are successful in obtaining necessary services and maintaining permanent housing.

Increase Placements in Permanent Housing

Measure:

Percentage of all clients served in shelters and transitional housing programs who exit to permanent housing. The measure would be calculated by dividing the annual unduplicated count of individuals and families who exit from shelters and transitional housing to permanent housing by the annual unduplicated count of all residents of shelters and transitional housing.

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Standard:

Annual increase by a specified number of percentage points in percentage of relevant clients making such exits during the reporting year.

HMIS Data Elements:

- Program Identification
- Program Exit Date
- Destination

Strengths:

- System-wide measure of the percentage of all clients served in shelter and transitional housing programs who exit to permanent housing for formerly homeless persons or other types of permanent housing covered by response categories of the HMIS destination question.
- More comprehensive than the current APR measure (includes shelter information and includes all clients rather than just those clients who exited the facility). Compels all providers to place clients in permanent housing as soon as possible.
- Renders performance against the measure more susceptible to changes in the number of people served in shelters and transitional housing (i.e., if the number of clients served in shelters and transitional housing grows at a faster rate than the number placed in permanent housing, performance will decline).
- Should be used in conjunction with the measure “Reduce Multi-Episode Patterns of Homelessness.” Focus of the current measure is *placing* clients in permanent housing.

Concerns:

- Requires that shelters and transitional housing providers collect information on client destination.

Increase Receipt of Mainstream Benefits

Mainstream Benefit	Measure	Standard	HMIS Data Elements
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	The percentage of clients reporting a developmental disability or a mental health problem “expected to be of long-continued or indefinite duration and impairing ability to live independently” who have SSI or SSD income.	Annual increase by a specified number of percentage points in percentage of relevant clients served during the reporting year who receives SSI or SSD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source/Amount Income • Developmental Disability • Mental Health
Veteran’s Benefits	The percentage of veterans who appear, on the basis of income, disabilities, and the detailed data element on military service, to be eligible for veteran’s pensions and disability benefits who receive	Annual increase by a specified number of percentage points in percentage of relevant clients served during the reporting year who receives veteran’s pensions or disability benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veteran’s Status • Veteran’s Information • Physical Disability • Mental Health • Source/Amount of Income

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	these benefits.		
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	Percentage of families with children who receive TANF income.	Annual increase by a specified number of percentage points in percentage of relevant clients served during the reporting year who receives TANF.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Identifier • Date of Birth • Employment • Sources/Amount Income
Health Insurance	Percentage of all households that have Medicare, Medicaid, SCHIP, or VA Medical Services	Annual increase by a specified number of percentage points in percentage of relevant clients served during the reporting year that has federally-funded health insurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Identifier • Non-Cash Benefits • Sources/Amount Income
Food Stamps	Percentage of all households that receive Food Stamps.	Annual increase by a specified number of percentage points in percentage of relevant clients served during the reporting year who receives food stamps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Identifier • Non-Cash Benefits • Source/Amount Income

Strengths:

- Can be used to provide both a continuum-wide and program-level glimpse at the percentage of clients receiving various mainstream resources.
- Uses data elements on income and non-cash benefits collected at program entry/assessment and exit making it possible to measure the change in the percentage of likely eligible clients who receive those benefits between entry and exit.
- Enables continuum to capture the year to year change in the percentage of presumptively eligible clients receiving the relevant benefit at any time during the collection of HMIS data from that client.
- Promotes greater accountability of continuum programs as well as mainstream resource agencies which distribute assistance.
- Can match HMIS client records with mainstream program administrative data. This would require an agreement between the local HMIS and the administrator of the data for each mainstream program to protect client confidentiality.

Concerns:

- Requires completion of elements from the HUD 40118 assessment for all shelters, transitional, and permanent housing programs as well as supportive service only projects.
- Holds continuum and homeless program providers responsible for connecting people to mainstream resources which may be outside their control. There are four steps involved in connecting homeless clients to mainstream resources: 1.) identifying eligible clients; 2.) applying for benefits; 3.) enrolling in the benefits program; and 4.) receiving the benefits. The extent to which clients are enrolled in the programs and actually receive benefits largely depends on the effectiveness of mainstream agencies.

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Client-Level Performance Measures

Client-level performance measures look for positive change in a client's circumstances over a specified time period. These outcome measures also provide a more precise evaluation of a particular program's areas of strength and weakness.

Client-Level Performance Measures

Permanent Housing

- Achieve appropriate permanent housing
- Retain permanent housing

Self-Sufficiency

- Increase income
- Increase employment
- Increase skills and education

Health and Well-Being

- Improve health

Permanent Housing: Achieve Appropriate Permanent Housing

Housing Type	Measure	Standard	HMIS Data Elements
Mainstream Housing	Percentage of all residents of emergency shelters and transitional housing during a year who exit to mainstream permanent housing during that year. OR Percentage of these clients exiting during the reporting year that exit to mainstream permanent housing.	Annual decrease in gap between the last year's percentage and an expected percentage based on client characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Identification • Household Identifier • Program Entry Date • Program Exit Date • Destination <p>May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status.</p>
Permanent Housing	Percentage of all residents of emergency shelters and transitional housing during a year for whom permanent supportive housing is appropriate who exit to permanent housing during that year.	Annual decrease in gap between last year's percentage and an expected percentage based on client characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Identification • Household Identifier • Program Entry Date • Program Exit Date • Destination <p>May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status.</p>

Note: This measure is specifically for emergency shelters and transitional housing programs.

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Strengths:

- Number of ways to modify the outcomes lists above:
 - Client Characteristics (Subpopulation)
 - Programming Type
- Could help continuum yield information about precariously housed (“Doubled/Tripled Up”)

Concerns:

- Requires destination data to be collected within emergency shelter and transitional housing

Permanent Housing: Remain in Permanent Housing

Housing Type	Measure	Standard	HMIS Data Elements
Mainstream Housing	Percentage of residents of emergency shelters, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing who exit to mainstream housing and do not reappear in the homeless service system for at least two years.	Annual decrease in clients who enter programs during the reporting year who were in the Continuum of Care’s homeless services system within the previous two years and exited to mainstream housing. Number or percentage decrease based on client characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Identification • Program Entry Date • Program Exit Date • Destination <p>May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status.</p>
Permanent Housing	Percentage of residents of permanent supportive housing during a year who have been continuously in permanent supportive housing within the Continuum of Care for at least a year. OR Percentage of residents who have lived in permanent supportive housing for six months or more.	Annual decrease in gap between last year’s percentage and an expected percentage that is based on client characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Identification • Household Identifier • Personal Identification • Program Entry Date • Program Exit Date <p>May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status.</p>

Strengths:

- Enables continuum to determine whether clients are able to maintain their permanent housing and may highlight gaps in service or emerging need areas.

Concerns:

- Requires full participation of permanent housing providers.

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Self-Sufficiency: Increase Income

Measure:

Change between each client's total income from all sources at entry into homeless service system and total income from all sources at exit.

Standard:

Year-to-year average change in monthly income (dollars) for all clients with amount of expected increase adjusted for client characteristics or specified percentage change.

HMIS Data Elements:

- Household Identifier
- Program Entry Date
- Program Exit Date
- Personal Identification
- Income and Source
- Date of Birth
- Disabling Condition
- Residence Prior to Program Entry
- Developmental Disability
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Income and Source
- Employment
- Education
- General Health Status

Strengths:

- Compares client incomes from program entry (Time One) to program exit (Time Two)
- Can be controlled for different client characteristics
- Can also identify and take into account local factors which limit income growth beyond the control of the homeless service system.

Concerns:

- Should be part of a menu of measures assessing self-sufficiency – programs should not be expected to be successful in achieving all three self-sufficiency outcomes (i.e., increase employment, increase income, increase skills and education) for the same client.
- More complicated for multi-person households (may wish to use household income for real comparison purposes).
- May need to exclude emergency shelters with rapid client turn-over. For this population, it may be better to look at the percentage of emergency shelter clients who have applied for mainstream benefits or have been connected to other sources of income.
- May be more important to measure change in income rather than comparing income at entry and exit – especially for permanent supportive housing populations.
- Need to determine a baseline standard for different client groups as this measure (and others like it) depend largely on client abilities and need areas.

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Self-Sufficiency: Increase Employment

Measure:

Among those unemployed at program entry into the homeless services system, percentage employed at exit for homeless services system or program.

Standard:

Annual decrease in gap between last year's percentage and an expected percentage that is based on client characteristics or specified percentage change.

HMIS Data Elements:

- Household Identifier
- Date of Birth
- Program Entry Date
- Program Exit Date
- Personal Identification
- Income and Source
- Employment

May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status.

Strengths:

- Can create different standards for different clients.
- Easier to measure employment than other forms of self-sufficiency.
- Can develop richer measures of employment (non-trivial) including measures of job stability, job retention, increased work hours, or improvement in job quality.

Concerns:

- Should be part of a menu of measures assessing self-sufficiency – programs should not be expected to be successful in achieving all three outcomes (i.e., increase employment, increase income, increase skills and education) for the same client.
- Indicator is sensitive to number of program exits (i.e., a program that has one person exit with full employment will earn 100% on this performance measure).
- Debate about how employment should be defined (e.g., wage work, temporary work, seasonal work, job training programs, education activities).
- Need to decide on standards for employment (based on hours per week, expected tenure of employment, hourly wage rate).
- May need to exclude shelters and some transitional housing facilities because of higher turnover of clients. Measure should only be applied if clients stay a specified number of weeks in the program.

Self-Sufficiency: Increase Skills and Education

Measure:

Among those clients with no high school diploma or GED at entry into the homeless service system, a percentage with high school diploma or GED at exit.

Standard:

Annual decrease in gap between last year's percentage and an expected percentage that is based on client characteristics or specified percentage change.

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HMIS Data Elements:

- Date of Birth
- Program Entry Date
- Program Exit Date
- Personal Identification
- Education

May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status.

Strengths:

- Offers complement to measure based on increases in employment.
- Clients with severe disadvantages may be more successful in leaving homelessness through increasing their skills and employability than by going to work immediately.
- There is also some suggestion that the increase in skills and education measure is a better predictor of long-term client stability and self-sufficiency when compared to the “increase income” measure.
- Can create different standards for different clients.
- Good measure of performance for programs receiving funding for job training, education, or skill improvement.

Concerns:

- Should be part of a menu of measures assessing self-sufficiency – programs should not be expected to be successful in achieving all three outcomes (i.e., increase employment, increase income, increase skills and education) for the same client.
- May need to exclude shelters and some transitional housing facilities because of higher turnover of clients. Measure should only be applied if clients stay a specified number of weeks in the program.

Health and Well-Being: Improve Health

Measure:

Among those rating their overall health as “poor” or “fair” at entry into the homeless service system, percentage whose health has improved to “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.”

Standard:

Annual decrease in gap between last year’s percentage and an expected percentage that is based on client characteristics.

HMIS Data Elements:

- Program Entry Date
- Program Exit Date
- Personal Identification
- General Health Status

May wish to adjust for client characteristics including age, disability, or health status

Strengths:

- Many people experiencing homelessness have poor overall health.
- An improvement in the health status of a homeless person between assessment and exit is an important objective in itself, as well as a possible indication of their ability to become self-reliant.

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- Can compare health at exit to a national benchmark for poor people of similar age and with similar disabilities.

Concerns:

- Single indicators of health status are very limited. May wish to include additional indicators of health status including mental health, substance abuse, disabling condition, and HIV/AIDS status.
- Need to refine adjustments for client characteristics based on analysis of HMIS data and other information.